

## 18th Legislative District

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# 2001 SESSION REPORT

**SEN. JOE ZARELLI**

**REP. JOHN PENNINGTON**

**REP. TOM MIELKE**

February 2001

Dear Friends,

Voters made history by electing the most evenly divided Legislature in state history. The House of Representatives is made up of 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats, while Democrats hold a narrow one-vote majority in the Senate. With so much at stake this year, it's critical that we put the frustrations of the recent election behind us and turn our attention to the needs of the citizens. The 2001 session will require unprecedented civility and bipartisanship.

The biggest issue looming is the two-year operating budget, which is already showing a substantial deficit. The cost of simply continuing current services combined with the cost of the mandated pay-raise and education initiatives approved by voters in November will exceed our available revenues by several hundred million dollars. We will be challenged to find significant cost reductions without diminishing important services.

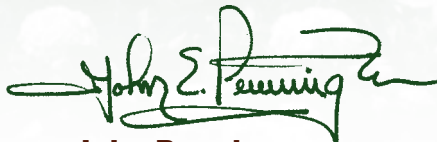
We also hope to continue making progress on a long-term transportation improvement plan for our state. Improvements are sorely needed to keep our economy strong and to get us home to our families sooner at the end of each day.

Attached to this report is a brief survey. Please take a moment to let us know what issues are important to you. The 2001 session promises to be a very important and very challenging one, and we look forward to hearing your ideas and concerns. Thank you for the honor of representing you in Olympia.

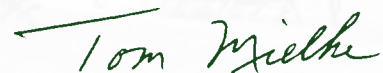
Sincerely,



**Joe Zarelli**  
State Senator



**John Pennington**  
Speaker Pro Tempore



**Tom Mielke**  
State Representative

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**Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000**

**Legislative information on the Internet:**  
[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

**State government on the Internet:**  
[access.wa.gov](http://access.wa.gov)

## OUR STATE NEEDS NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY

The rising cost of energy already is costing workers their jobs. Manufacturers have been forced to scale back. Now residents are feeling the effects as the enormous surcharges imposed by local utilities statewide are showing up on household energy bills. Those on



*Sen. Zarelli serves as the Senate Republican Caucus Vice Chair. He also is the lead Senate Republican negotiator on the capital budget, which allocates money for state-wide construction projects, including new schools.*

fixed incomes will be hit hardest by these increases, which is why we are working to address the energy issue.

Rep. Mielke has been appointed to the Technology, Telecommunications and Energy Committee and will be directly involved in finding a solution to the energy crisis.

To ease this burden, we need to clear a path to encourage new generation facilities that will meet our state's energy needs. And we

need to take immediate action to encourage consumers and businesses to conserve more energy until we can safely meet the demand.

With the volatility in the energy market this winter, it should be clear to everyone that discussion of breaching our hydroelectric dams is not a well thought-out idea. Hydroelectric dams provide a renewable source of energy and they remain our most efficient and environmentally friendly method of producing electricity.

## SENIORS STILL NEED PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Rising property values continue to plague our seniors on fixed incomes. We were thrilled to see the governor embrace our plan to exempt low-income seniors and people with disabilities from the state property tax levy.

Rep. Pennington has introduced legislation that would provide tax breaks for seniors and disabled homeowners who have household incomes below \$50,000 a year. Seniors and disabled homeowners

who earn less than the median income for the county where they reside would be exempt from all excess levies, such as school levies, and the assessed value of their home would be frozen for tax purposes.

This is an overdue first step needed to help retired homeowners who risk losing their homes to higher assessments and rising taxes.



## OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO PRIVACY

With the advent of new technologies and the ability to obtain, store, and retrieve information, citizens' right to privacy is being threatened. In the wrong hands, personal medical records, bank account information, credit card balances, and social security numbers can result in serious problems. Businesses bear some responsibility for the safekeeping of information, but legislation is needed to safeguard private infor-

mation such as medical records and legal firearms purchases.

Gov. Locke is proposing the expansion of a program to collect and store data on the legal firearms purchases of law-abiding citizens. He wants private information on gun owners to be electronically stored so it can easily be checked and cross-referenced.

In response to this obvious violation of our right to privacy, Sen.

Zarelli has sponsored SB 5177, which further expands existing federal protections. When an application is filled out for a legal firearm purchase, the application is used to do a background check and is then **supposed to be destroyed!** Instead, the Department of Licensing has kept these records in a database for at least the past six years. We want to end this abusive and dangerous practice.

# WASHINGTON STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BUDGET SHELL GAMES

The challenges of the 2001-03 operating budget are significant. The governor has failed to respond to the warning signs of an impending budget crisis and is setting the state up for a fiscal emergency. It's a situation similar to the fallout from the budget he helped write as a legislator in 1991 – a spending plan which spent \$695 million more than expected revenue, causing the largest tax increase in state history.

Gov. Locke's proposed budget spends approximately \$600 million more than the voter-approved spending limit, I-601, allows. He wants to add \$1.2 billion in new spending, which means his budget will spend \$425 million more than estimated revenues for the 2001-03 biennium. How does the governor do this and still stay within the voter-approved spending limit?

The governor has taken "off-budget" items and programs paid

for through dedicated funds and placed them "on-budget," in order to increase the amount he can spend under the voter-approved spending limit law. But instead of appropriating the dedicated revenue for these items, Locke takes that money and spends it elsewhere, once again increasing the amount of money he is allowed to spend. These kinds of budget gimmicks do not bode well for Washington taxpayers.

As a member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Zarelli will con-

tinue to be a voice of restraint during these budget shenanigans, and will work to keep your hard-earned tax dollars in your pockets where they belong.



*Rep. Pennington has been re-elected Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives. He presides over the House and serves as a key member of the House Republican leadership team.*

## PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

### CLEAN AIR . . .

We are supporting a number of bills introduced by Rep. Pennington aimed at protecting clean air and clean water and enhancing our natural resources. We will be working again to provide incentives for the development and use of clean-burning alternative fuel vehicles, by providing tax breaks for people who purchase or lease these vehicles and by allowing them to travel in HOV lanes.

We also support transferring control over outdoor burning laws from the Department of Ecology to local communities. Let's impose controls only where they're needed while not unnecessarily burdening citizens in rural areas.

### . . . AND CLEAN WATER

We are supporting Rep. Pennington's bill calling for an immediate ban on the use of MTBE (methyl tertiary

butyl ether) as an additive in gasoline. MTBE, a suspected carcinogen, is added to gasoline to help reduce emissions, but it is now leaching into our ground water. The state Department of Ecology at one time had assured us it was not a problem in this state. Now MTBE has been detected at 30 sites throughout the state, including several in southwest Washington. The EPA announced a proposed ban on MTBE but has yet to follow through. We're calling for an immediate ban in Washington to protect citizens from imminent environmental danger.





## TRANSPORTATION: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRIORITY

Transportation issues are not divided by party — they are divided by region, districts, counties, and the individual needs of our state.

In January, Rep. Mielke was appointed to the Legislative Transportation Committee, a group of House and Senate members charged with developing options

and sharing ideas between the two legislative transportation committees. Committee members are better able to carry out their budget and policy duties because of the information and resources available through the LTC.

With Rep. Mielke's seats on the LTC and the House Transportation

Committee, we will better be able to secure funding for the 219<sup>th</sup> Street interchange, as reducing traffic along the I-5/205 corridor needs to be high priority. We can also provide ongoing oversight of the state Department of Transportation, ensuring accountability to the public.

### THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

Our state's economy relies on an efficient transportation system. The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, a 46-member panel of elected officials, business members and citizens, spent two years studying the state's 20-year transportation needs. It was created by the Legislature and Gov. Locke to develop a plan while lawmakers use existing revenue to fix the most urgent traffic needs.

In November, the BRC recommended spending \$50 billion over 20 years. The 11 different tax and fee increases proposed by the BRC are unacceptable until the government listens to the people and starts doing business differently. The state must use the citizens' money wisely, determining every efficiency.



*Rep. Mielke was appointed to a two-year term on the Legislative Transportation Committee, which will give him a voice for southwest Washington on state transportation funding decisions.*

## INTERNET SAFETY MEASURES, ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LIBRARIES

We've heard enough horror stories about Internet usage leading to criminal activities and the exploitation of our children. Many parents have contacted us to tell us that their children have unfettered access to objectionable material on the Internet at our local libraries. Unfortunately, they feel their concerns are being ignored by their local library boards.

One of the underlying problems we've discovered is that library board members are appointed, not

elected by the communities they serve. This results in a lack of accountability when decisions are made. These boards also have taxing authority — which they've exercised — despite citizens' continuing demand for lower taxes.

This session Rep. Mielke will introduce legislation to require the popular election of library board members, as citizens deserve the right to have a voice in library policy.

We are also supporting legislation cosponsored by Sen. Zarelli (SB

5233) that requires libraries to have policies and technology in place to protect their Internet users from cyberspace pornography. There are enough advances in Internet filters to prevent viewing sexually explicit material on the World Wide Web. Every piece of material in the libraries — every book, magazine, newspaper, video and audio tape — is screened in some way. We should expect the same standard, the same measure of protection, for Internet use.

# WASHINGTON STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BUDGET FACTS

### DID YOU KNOW? Gov. Locke's proposed budget:

- Spends \$22.726 billion
- Adds \$1.2 billion in new spending
- Spends \$425 million more than estimated revenue for the 2001-03 biennium
- Transfers \$170 million from the emergency reserve fund to pay for transportation – purportedly enough to pay for maintenance and preservation
- Offers a \$9.6 billion transportation project list with **NO REVENUE SOURCE IDENTIFIED TO FUND ANY OF THE NEW PROJECTS**

## BE OUR GUEST AT 18<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT DAY!

You are invited to spend the day at the state Capitol in Olympia as our guest on March 7. Please join us for an interesting day watching our state government in action. The day will begin at 9:45 a.m. with a tour of Capitol Campus facilities. You will have lunch with your legislators and spend time talking about issues important to you.

Please RSVP or call Rep. Pennington's Olympia office for more information at (360) 786-7812.

### 18<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT DAY AGENDA OLYMPIA - MARCH 7, 2001

- 9:45 a.m. Meet in the Capitol Rotunda
- 10 a.m. Tour of the Governor's Mansion
- 11:30 a.m. Tour of the Temple of Justice
- Noon Lunch with your legislators – bring a brown bag lunch. Drinks will be provided.
- 1 p.m. Tour of the Legislative Building, including Secretary of State's office and Reception Room (weather permitting, Vietnam Memorial and Capitol Conservatory)
- 2:30 Tour concludes – possible committee meetings or floor action



Cut along this line

## WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU!

Please rank the following issues on a scale of one to seven, with one being very important and seven being not important to you. If you want more information on the progress of issues that are important to you, please provide an address or e-mail address, and we'll be glad to keep you informed.

- |                             |                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ___ Taxes and spending      | ___ Traffic congestion and safety | ___ Energy costs        |
| ___ Education               | ___ Environment                   | ___ Crime/Public safety |
| ___ Prescription drug costs | ___ State regulations             | ___ Other _____         |

☐ Please send more information on the issues I've indicated are most important to me.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	Name _____
_____	Address _____
_____	E-mail _____
_____	Once completed, please cut out this survey and mail it to the following address: Rep. John Pennington, P.O. Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600.
_____	

# 2001

## SESSION REPORT



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**State Senator**

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**Leadership and  
Committee Assignments:**

Caucus Vice Chair  
Capital Budget, Ranking Member  
Judiciary  
Ways & Means  
Education



**John Pennington**  
**Speaker Pro Tempore**

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**Committee Assignments:**

Finance  
Natural Resources  
Health Care  
Rules  
Ethics Board



**Tom Mielke**  
**State Representative**

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**Committee Assignments:**

Transportation  
Local Government and Housing  
Agriculture and Ecology  
Technology, Telecommunications  
and Energy

- Our state needs new sources of energy
- Internet safety measures for libraries
- Transportation accountability and priority
- Our constitutional right to privacy

### INSIDE:

**Senator Joseph Zarelli**  
**Representative John Pennington**  
**Representative Tom Mielke**  
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